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## BIBLE INSTRUCTION IN COLLEGES

Only in the last few years has there been any adequate consciousness of the anomalous position of Christian colleges with reference to Biblical instruction. They were founded originally for the purpose of maintaining religious scholarship and of training men for the ministry. In the course of a century, however, the church colleges, while quite properly expanding their curricula to meet the growing conceptions of professional and liberal education, neglected their own special responsibility. The results of this neglect were deplorable.

### INVESTIGATIONS.

A few years ago the Religious Education Association made a careful study of the field and expressed the conclusion that "the colleges have not given religion a place in the curricula commensurate with its place in life." It was estimated by a college president that 90% of all the students enrolled in denominational colleges had no opportunity to study comparative religion, the philosophy and psychology of religion, or the biography or ethics of Jesus. "These subjects (not being considered cultural) had given way to the ethics of Spencer, the philosophy of Plato, the poetry of Browning, the history of democracy, the pedagogy of Comenius."

In 1915 a committee of the Council of Church Boards of Education examined the bulletins of 150 institutions and in 1916 made a more careful inquiry covering 203 colleges. Only 57 of these had professors giving full time to Biblical work and a slightly smaller number gave part time instruction. During the same year the R. E. A. committee began its systematic standardization. One hundred fourteen institu-

tions were examined and 32 of these credited as Class A college with full time work in Biblical subjects. In 1917 a more complete classification was published, indicating that 65 out of 238 colleges offer full time work. In 1918 the number was 79 out of 299.

The net result of discussion, protest, and inquiry of this character has been a general agreement among Christian educators that those institutions of higher education which have been founded by the church and are now supported by religious interests are under a peculiar obligation to offer Biblical instruction which is on a par both in character and amount with the work of other departments.

The movement in this direction has been two-fold. There has been a steady effort to secure larger financial backing for this work, mainly under the lead of denominational boards of education. On the other hand, an effort to standardize the methods and content of courses in Bible study has grown out of the co-operative activities of Biblical instructors, stimulated by the R. E. A. It is obvious that both of these movements approach the same goal from different angles.

### **FINANCIAL SUPPORT.**

No account can be given of the exact funds expended in this field, as many Biblical departments are conducted on a part time basis. The estimated expenditures of full time departments, of which there are slightly more than 100 in the Protestant colleges of the country, would not be greatly in excess of \$150,000. With a liberal addition for part time work, a total of a quarter of a million dollars still seems discreditably small in proportion to the entire educational budget. The latest information available gives us the following distribution of full time departments among the denominations: Baptists 8, Congregational 13, Disciples 6, Protestant Episcopal 3, Friends 7, Methodist Episcopal 21, Methodist South 7, Presbyterian U. S. A. 30, Presbyterian U. S. 7, United Presbyterian 1.

### **ENDOWMENTS.**

Probably not more than half of these departments at the present time are properly endowed. The situation has been steadily improving in the last few years and the interest of a number of boards of education is now active in that direction. The first to deal adequately with this problem was the College Board of the Presbyterian Church. Finding in 1914 that in their 64 colleges they had only nine endowed Bible chairs and four partially endowed, they projected a campaign under the leadership of Dr. Clarke. Up to the present time this has resulted in completing the Bible chairs in 22 institutions, with eight others partially complete, the aggregate funds amounting to \$825,600. Seven

of a single professor, but this dictum is not uniformly accepted. One college president writes, "If I had a choice between having three men give one-third of their time to the Bible department, or one man giving all of his time, I would choose the former. I think the department would be stronger, fresher, and more related to life." Unquestionably, in this most difficult of pedagogical fields, the problems of method and organization will necessitate a continual examination and interchange of ideas and it would be inadvisable to press the movement for uniformity beyond a point which meets with general agreement. The movement for standards, however, has been fruitful in stimulating the steady growth of religious instruction and Bible departments are rapidly coming into their own as an important factor in the whole educational program.

### ORGANIZATION OF BIBLICAL INSTRUCTORS.

The work of the Church Boards of Education and the Religious Education Association has thus far been largely promotional and critical in this field. Beyond the creation of a Bible department and the analysis of what constitutes proper equipment there are many problems which necessarily must be turned over to teachers in religious education. For some years the Association of Bible Teachers has met annually in the East, but there has been a growing feeling that a western branch of the Association would prove of value. In June, 1918, a preliminary conference for organization of this branch was held at the University of Chicago and Professor Rollin H. Walker, of Ohio Wesleyan University, was made chairman for the year. Undoubtedly, these two associations will be in a position to handle effectively such questions as the content of courses, the relative proportion of required and optional work, etc., on which there is now a great divergence of practice and opinion among the various boards and colleges.

There is even a greater task ahead in the relation of college Bible departments to the general problem of moral education. This will call for the erection of an entire graded system running from the Sabbath schools and public schools up to the highest branches of college, university, and seminary. It is well known that the movement for moral education in public schools has been gaining headway in several states and the attitude of such men as John H. Finley is prophetic. That the great independent institutions are taking account of this situation is evident from the announcement of Columbia University that hereafter one Bible unit will be accepted for admission. On the other hand, the church forces have been active. In June, 1918, a joint conference of the International Sunday School Association, the Association of Biblical

campaigns. Richmond college, Virginia, is raising a one million dollar endowment, \$50,000 of which is for a chair of Bible. One-half of this amount has already been pledged. Grove City college in 1918 announced the establishment of a chair of Bible, with an endowment of \$55,000. Franklin college, Indiana, has recently secured funds through the State Convention to maintain a department of this character. During the last two years, Yankton and Piedmont colleges and Fisk University have taken a forward step in this direction, and there are doubtless other institutions which have not reported their activity.

### STANDARDIZATION.

The difficult task of standardization started in 1915 by a committee of the R. E. A., has resulted thus far in the investigation of 209 institutions. At the present time this work is in charge of Dr. Irving F. Wood, Smith college, Massachusetts. The last report showed 79 Class A Bible departments, 43 Class B, 84 Class C, 58 Class D, 35 Class E where no Bible is taught. Out of the 65 Class A schools in 1917, 13 were Methodist Episcopal, 10 Presbyterian, 9 independent, 7 Baptist, 7 Congregational, 6 Disciples and 5 Friends. In Classes A, B and C combined, the Methodist Episcopal colleges numbered 28, the Presbyterian U. S. A., 26, independent institutions, 24, Congregational 17, Baptist North 16, Lutheran 7, State institutions 5, United Presbyterian, Reformed in America, Methodist South and Baptist South 3 each, and the Friends 5. One is astonished to find only two churches with as many standard Bible departments as are to be found in independent institutions. Apparently, there are more standard Bible departments in State institutions, also, than in some of the fairly large denominations of the country. Unquestionably, these facts should give added impetus to the effort of religious bodies to discharge their responsibility in this field of education.

The work of classification necessarily involves the setting up of standards, some of which are difficult to apply and frequently meet with criticism. It has often been claimed that the creation of formal departments to study the materials of religion is by no means a substitute for religious atmosphere and that it may easily tend toward a critical rather than devotional attitude of mind. However, experience has shown no adequate ground for this objection and the organizations developing this field have consistently stood for a full time department of Biblical instruction which in every respect is on a par with other departments. Both in the organization of departments and the classification of institutions on the basis of these departments there will doubtless be much divergence of opinion for some years to come. For example, the standards thus far formulated call for the full time service

hundred forty-three thousand dollars is still being sought by the colleges. This progress has been possible through conditional gifts of the board out of the John C. Martin fund. (The largest endowments reported are those of Wooster, \$118,456; Coe, \$60,000; Lafayette, \$60,000.)

In 1914 the Methodist Church South adopted resolutions favoring "the permanent endowment of chairs of religious education in each of its colleges during the next quadrennium." This movement is still under way.

The Friends have at the present time \$769,296 back of their nine Biblical departments.

Several colleges of the Methodist Episcopal Church have liberal endowments for Bible work, although none of the funds raised in the Jubilee Campaign have been designated for this purpose and no denominational effort for Bible endowment has been projected. Mount Union has a \$40,000 endowment; Wesleyan University \$65,000; Ohio Wesleyan \$40,000; Cornell \$31,000; Lawrence \$30,000; Albion \$25,000, and other colleges smaller amounts. A much larger sum is available at Wesley College, North Dakota.

Somewhat similar to the Wesley Foundation is the Bible instruction supported by the Woman's Board of Missions of the Disciples Church. Four Bible chairs are maintained at the Universities of Michigan, Kansas, Virginia and Texas. All but one of these have considerable endowment funds. While six colleges of the denomination have Biblical departments, no general campaign has been made.

In the Presbyterian U. S. denomination, six colleges are reported with endowed Bible chairs and a seventh shortly to be added to the list.

Among the recent developments in this field must be noted the significant action of the educational commission of the Baptist Church, South, at its last meeting. It was recommended that Bible chairs be established in 21 Baptist colleges, the funds to be included in the fifteen million dollars which the denomination expects to raise in the next five years.

Equally important is the highly organized campaign now being successfully conducted by the United Presbyterian Board of Education for its five colleges. On the first of October, 1918, this had resulted in a total of \$173,000, nearly all of which had been paid in. The first Bible chair was established at Monmouth college and there is reasonable ground for expecting that the fund of \$200,000 will be completed this year.

Among the individual colleges this movement is going steadily forward, although the present year has not been favorable to financial

Instructors, and the Council of Church Boards of Education, took steps to officially define a unit of Biblical work for college entrance requirements. The working out of these successive steps in religious education and the introduction of them into Sunday schools and public and independent institutions will mean the beginning of a tremendous correlation of educational agencies in which the Biblical departments of the colleges should play an important part.